

Tobacco – Prevent Youth Initiation

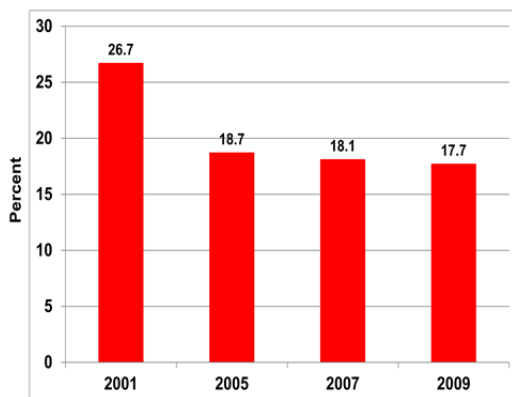
More than 80 percent of adult tobacco users start when they are young and carry their nicotine addiction into adulthood, risking chronic disease and premature death. Nearly 18 percent of high school students currently smoke cigarettes, and 60 percent of those who tried to buy tobacco were successful, despite state law that prohibits retailers from selling tobacco products to minors. The tobacco industry targets susceptible Colorado kids with youth-oriented marketing and new, easier-to-use tobacco products.

Why is this important?

Adolescents are vulnerable targets for the tobacco industry because they are more sensitive to nicotine's toxic effects, more susceptible to peer pressure and more likely to respond to tobacco discounts. Kids who use tobacco have lower academic achievement than those who don't. Kids' exposure to tobacco advertising is higher in low-income and minority communities. Reducing illegal sales of tobacco to minors has the potential to slow addiction rates and prevent as many as 4,300 tobacco-related deaths each year.

Where are we?

Percent of Colorado 9-12 graders who smoke, 2001-2009



Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

Baseline data from the first part of 2011 shows that 9.7% of Colorado minors who smoke were able to buy tobacco.

Source: Prevention Services Division,
Colorado Department of Public Health
and Environment

Where do we want to be?

By 2016,

- decrease to 16 percent the percentage of high school students who currently smoke cigarettes;
- decrease to 5 percent the percentage of minors who smoke and are able to buy tobacco.

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Mental Health and Substance Abuse Obesity Oral Health Safe Food Tobacco Unintended Pregnancy

What is being done?

Colorado is employing numerous proven strategies to combat youth tobacco use where Coloradans live, learn, work and play, including

- supporting state and local initiatives to reduce youth exposure to tobacco;
- communicating public health messages that counteract pro-tobacco marketing;
- increasing and enforcing restrictions on tobacco sales to minors;
- actively enforce the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act;
- supporting proven school-based, youth-friendly programs such as “N-O-T (Not on Tobacco)” and “Second Chance”;
- finding and sustaining adequate funding for evidence-based comprehensive tobacco control initiatives.

Interventions to prevent youth tobacco use initiation and encourage cessation need to reshape the environment in which Colorado kids live to support tobacco-free norms. Communities can encourage youth to make healthy decisions by demonstrating their value to the community, providing meaningful scholastic engagement opportunities and ensuring access to youth-appropriate health care services.

High-risk groups

The tobacco industry targets communities with the greatest tobacco burdens. American Indian, Hispanic, multi-racial and low socioeconomic youth are more likely to use tobacco than other groups. Males are more likely than females to use both smokeless tobacco and cigarettes. Youth are more susceptible than others to nicotine addiction and tobacco industry marketing.

Underlying causes

Cigarettes are designed for addiction, and youth have been shown to be more susceptible than adults to nicotine’s toxic effects. The 7,000 chemicals in a cigarette are carried from the lungs into the bloodstream and through all parts of a smoker’s body. These poisons damage DNA, which can lead to cancer; damage blood vessels and cause clotting, which can cause heart attacks and strokes; and damage the lungs, which can cause asthma attacks, emphysema and chronic bronchitis. The longer a person smokes, the more damage is caused.

The tobacco industry spends approximately \$140 million per year in Colorado, 90 percent of which is spent on in-store marketing and discounts. Young people are three times more influenced by tobacco advertising than adults, so industry efforts to market tobacco at corner stores and keep prices artificially low serve to lure young smokers. Unfortunately, insufficient enforcement of laws banning tobacco sales to minors makes it easy for Colorado kids to purchase tobacco products.

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